



Grassroots Arts Program FY2009 Annual Report

Since its creation by the Georgia Legislature in 1994, Georgia Council for the Arts' Grassroots Arts Program (GAP) has aimed to increase access to the arts for all Georgians, encourage the emergence of local arts programs and new organizations, and empower local citizens to choose the arts they want in their communities. The program reached unprecedented levels of success this past fiscal year and is on track to do so again in FY 2010.

But will it disappear in FY 2011? This is the question that Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) is repeatedly hearing from our contractors, their board members, audiences, and citizens across the state.

Hundreds of cities and counties benefited from the **newly restructured** Grassroots Arts Program (GAP) in FY 2009. Nearly a **million people** (participants and audience) at the GAP events want the program to continue. They cite reasons such as these:

- *The children's book illustrator stressed that 'You cannot make a mistake when you're drawing your own character.' At the conclusion of the workshop, one very excited little boy came up to the librarian, showed her his drawing, and exclaimed, 'The man was right. I can draw!'*
- *The music our young pickers are learning to make together is one of the sweetest sounds I know. It is the past of our ancestors carried into the future in the hands and hearts of our children.*
- *An association member was determined to help a wheelchair-bound, severely disabled girl participate in tile painting. Though the girl could not communicate verbally, the member was convinced there was a cognizant mind trapped inside the disabled body. Volunteers figured out how to help her choose colors and guided her hands to paint her tile, and signing and dating it for her while she watched. When after repeated effort she gained enough control to grab and hold a volunteer's hands, she communicated delight with her eyes, and did so again when she saw her finished tile. This art project may have opened prison gates for this child. We've been blessed.*
- *Organizers were particularly touched to observe the effect of the music on Alzheimer's patients at the nursing homes. Those residents were able to focus on the music, be 'in the moment,' and participate in the event despite their health challenges.*
- *This is all about creating businesses and jobs in the area. Our clients and vendors have begun viable businesses that are hiring our neighbors and making a way for our citizens to live a more productive life.*
- *Artist workshop graduates have been invited to teach their own workshops on harvesting kudzu, helping develop a potential future cottage industry for the region.*

- *We know the arts play a major role in economic development and cultural commerce is vital to the health and wellness of communities. I believe community theatre is a wonderful way to attract visitors to our city and county.*
- *Libraries have seen an increase in attendance since the economy has taken a downturn, especially among older children whose parents are looking for affordable family activities. This program would not have been possible without the support of GAP.*
- *This event supported the pride of being a strong community even in the roughest of times.*

These GAP stories are among hundreds speaking to the value of the arts in education and in community development and economic success. They're told in the 158 **Best Stories** included. And there are many, many more such stories.

Creation

Created by the Georgia Legislature as a budget note in 1994, GAP was initially funded with \$200,000. In 1995, the funding was increased to \$500,000. It is a re-granting program necessitated by the Georgia Constitution, which allows the agency to provide competitive contracts only to registered nonprofits or units of governments. In most of Georgia's counties, mostly rural, there are art guilds and clubs, but most are managed by volunteers and are not registered with the Georgia Secretary of State or the IRS.

Mission

GAP's mission is to provide for access to the arts in **every county** and assist in the emergence of arts nonprofits. The original idea was to grant funds to an arts agency, which in turn could re-grant the dollars to clubs/guilds that didn't meet the requirements for direct grants from GCA. The GAP funding formula assured that every county was allocated funds on a combined per county and per capita basis.

Local Control

Local control is also central to GAP. Some Georgia legislators are already familiar with the adjudication process, being members of the new, regional GAP Advisory Committees that are made up of representatives from every county. These local committees vote which applications to fund in their regions. They are the voices of their communities: local citizens making local choices.

Lack of Performance

GAP did not meet its mission before FY 2004; in fact, no more than 88 counties were ever reached. From FY 2005 through 2008, GCA staff worked to increase the counties reached and succeeded, getting state dollars into every county in two of these years. But it was not sustainable and every year was a struggle. Why?

The Reasons

In 2006, GCA conducted a survey of the nonprofits that served as the re-granters of GAP funds. The results told a story of "*too little trying to do too big of a good thing.*"

Nineteen percent of the time, the GAP Agencies were unable to grant more than 50% of the funds allocated per county. The survey results presented these reasons:

	Reason	Percent
1	Lack of qualified applicants: those capable of completing the arts programming successfully and meeting all reporting requirements	54
2	Specific barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small amount of re-granting funds created perceived inequity: <i>All of this work for a couple of hundred dollars?</i> • Volunteer organizations without the time, staff or expertise to write the application or attend the workshops 	38
3	Lack of local arts organizations or local governments willing to apply	27
4	Inadequate applicant capacity to complete grant requirements	27
5	Insufficient applicant capacity to provide the required match dollars (though only 50%)	19
6	Inadequate marketing funds or know-how to attract potential applicants	15
7	Inadequate statewide marketing efforts to attract applicants and inform local leadership	8
8	Staff turnover due to very low administrative fees	4

GAP Re-structure Required

Clearly, GAP needed an overhaul. Specifically, it needed:

- A regional approach: fewer local administrators for GCA to train to achieve better results
- More dollars per county to support administrative fees and re-granting
- Statewide research to identify potential applicants
- A network of administrators meeting annually to share ‘best practices’

Senate/GCA Collaborative Evaluation

During the summers of 2007 and 2008 a Senate Study Committee discussed the difficulties and potential solutions. The final re-structured program met the goals and conditions of the program and the committee’s priorities. Senator Jack Hill and the committee agreed that if the state budget allowed, an additional \$500,000 would be added to the GCA allocation for GAP.

FY 2009 State Budget provided the extra dollars. But the early stages of the recession forced Governor Perdue to remove all new agency funds.

Implementation

In FY 2009 GCA took an unprecedented step to fund GAP at its \$1 million level without the additional budget dollars. The agency believed in the new regional restructure. The re-granting agencies were enthused and wanted to execute the new design.

Exceptional Results

The re-structured program worked beyond expectations in FY 2009! The chart below, comparing the last year of the old against the re-structured GAP as a regional entity, details the success.

DATA	FY 2008	FY 2009
Total State Funds	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,000,000
Total Number of Awards	295	470
Number of Counties Reached	144	158
Total Audience	287 K	867 K

FY 2010 GAP

Once again, the recession hit GAP hard. The Conference Committee reduced the GCA budget by an additional \$1,000,000 over the Governor's recommendation, making GCA the hardest hit state agency, down 63%.

GCA was able to salvage the new GAP by allotting its Economic Stimulus funds to the program. GCA's investment in GAP for FY 2010 was less than \$842,000. This meant that the other grant programs took the brunt of the cut. Even so, with severe administrative cuts (staff down to 66% of full employment) and the elimination of two grants, GCA absorbed 35% of the loss, reducing its other grants by only 25%.

FY 2011 GAP

There will be no Grassroots Arts Program unless at least half of the FY 2010 budget cuts are restored.